

**WASHINGTON, DC - Congressman Steny H. Hoyer (MD) released the following statement marking the first day of 'Cover the Uninsured Week':**

'Today marks the beginning of 'Cover the Uninsured Week,' which is designed to remind us of the plight of the 47 million Americans who lack health insurance - despite living in the richest country in the world. Since President Bush took office, 8 million more Americans have joined them. That is nothing less than a national embarrassment.

'Worst of all, 9 million uninsured Americans are children. Democrats in Congress have worked hard to help them get the medical care they need by focusing on the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP). SCHIP is vital for providing health care to low-income American children: Without it, the number of children with no health insurance would be even higher than its already shameful rate. That's why Democrats have made it a priority to fully fund and strengthen SCHIP - because it is both the right thing to do and a reflection of our values.

'Sadly, our efforts for uninsured children have been repeatedly blocked by President Bush and Congressional Republicans. Even though bipartisan majorities in both chambers supported an expansion of SCHIP, President Bush vetoed it - twice.

'Democrats strongly disagree with the President's position. We have an obligation to protect those who cannot protect themselves, and we will continue to fight until every child in America gets the medical care that he or she needs and deserves.'

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